

Sport

Hertha shock Bayern

COLOGNE, Germany, Nov 22: Hertha Berlin, despite playing out the final half hour with 10 men, handed Bayern Munich their second defeat of the season on Saturday to open up the Bundesliga title race, reports AFP.

Michael Preetz scored the only goal, in the 68th minute in front of 75,000 fans in Berlin's Olympic Stadium after Dutch defender Dick van Burik was sent off.

Meanwhile, second-placed Bayer Leverkusen destroyed VfL Bochum 5-1 and now have 29 points, just two behind Bayern who have a game in hand.

The leaders, weakened by the absence of midfield playmaker Stefan Effenberg (back problems), also began without Brazilian striker Givoane Elber.

He came on as a late substitute after flying in at the last-minute following Brazil's mid-week win over Russia.

Bayern began with Iranian international Ali Daei partnering Alexander Zickler in attack but the pair received no service at all.

The jet-lagged Elber played the final half-hour but failed to shine. Mario Basler, who played for Germany in Wednesday's friendly with Holland, was also left on the bench for the opening hour.

Leverkusen fans began chanting "Bayern, we're coming" after watching their side thrash VfL Bochum.

The one blot was Leverkusen coach Christoph Daum's being sent to the stands after shouting at the referee.

Leverkusen face a potential table-topping clash with Bayern Munich in three weeks time.

Marco Reich's 77th-minute goal, meanwhile, gave champions Kaiserslautern a 1-0 win over Borussia Dortmund to keep his side fourth on 27 points, level with 1860 Munich who drew 0-0 with Hamburg.

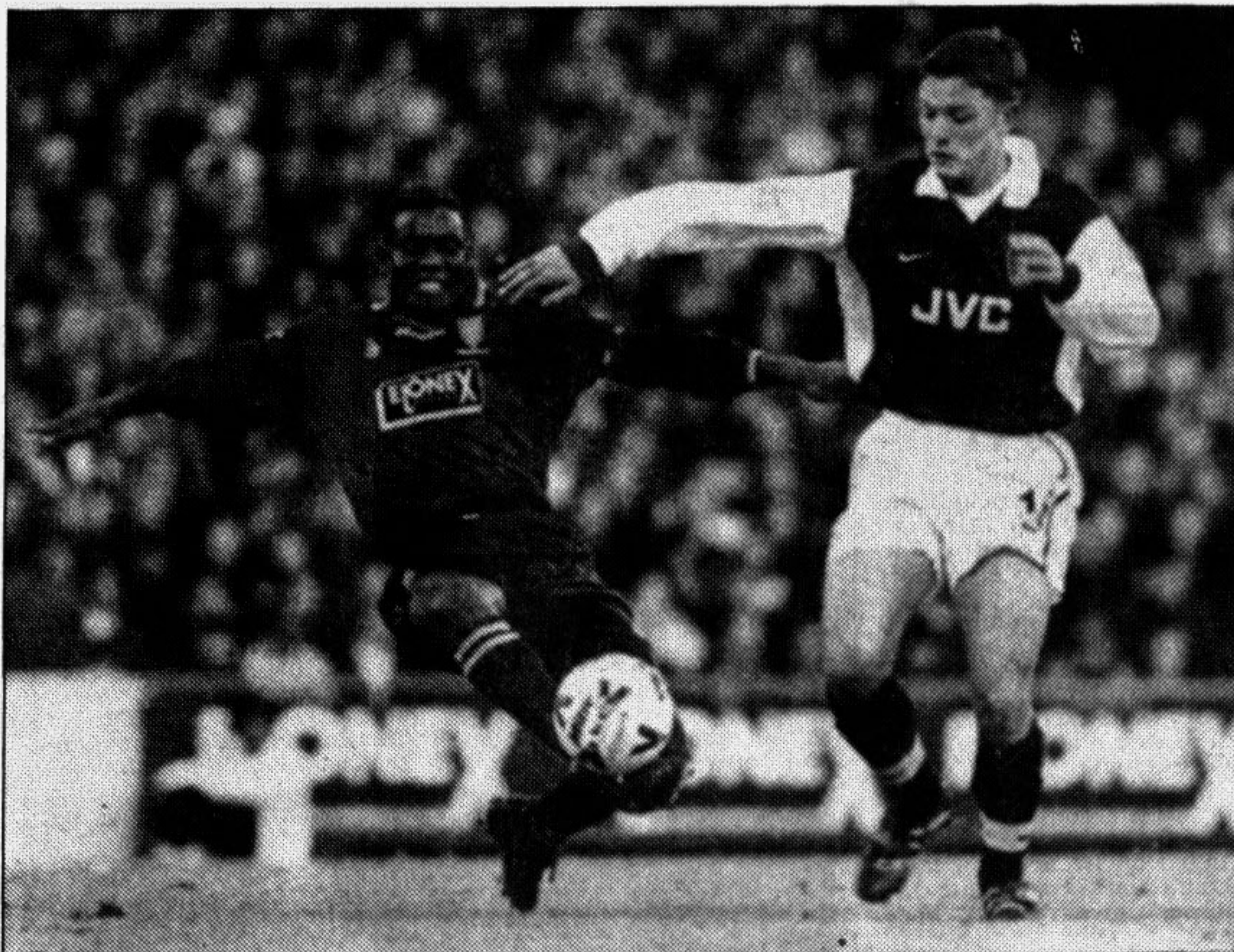
The way Hamburg played here today had nothing to do with Bundesliga football. They only had one shot, 1860 coach Werner Lorant complained.

Stuttgart coach Winfried Schafer's job prospects took another battering when lowly Sa Rostock clung on for a 1-1 draw and their first away point this season.

Stuttgart's fans chanted "Schafer out" after the game, a sentiment supported by some of the players at a club where infighting has been prevalent for several seasons.

Wolfsburg kept up their recent run of form, following five consecutive victories with a 1-1 draw in Nuremberg. The home side suffered a blow when Czech striker Pavel Kuka was taken to hospital with broken ribs.

On Friday Werder Bremen broke a seven-match winless streak with a 2-0 win at Eintracht Frankfurt. Schalke also boosted their sagging confidence by defeating Duisburg 2-0.



Arsenal's Stephen Hughes (R) being intercepted by Robbie Earle of Wimbledon during their English Premiership encounter in London on November 21. Wimbledon 1-0.

Fowler floors Villa

LONDON, Nov 22: A Robbie Fowler hat-trick helped inflict a first league defeat of the season on leaders Aston Villa on Saturday as Liverpool won a pulsating Premier league match 4-2 at Villa park, reports Reuters.

The top three all lost as second-placed Manchester United went down 3-1 at Sheffield Wednesday and third-placed Arsenal slipped 1-0 away to Wimbledon.

Those results allowed Chelsea and Leeds United to close ground, with a 4-2 success at Leicester City and a 4-1 victory over Charlton Athletic respectively.

Liverpool had won only once in their previous nine-league games but roared 2-0 ahead after seven minutes with headers by Paul Ince and Fowler.

There was end-to-end action and chances galore but no more goals until Dion Dublin pulled one back two minutes into the second half.

Fowler restored the two-goal advantage only for Dublin, with his seventh goal in three games since joining Villa from Coventry City, to make it 3-2.

Fowler struck again for 4-2 and Villa then had Stan Collymore sent off for a second booking in the 68th minute.

Dublin missed a chance for his second successive hat-trick as David James brilliantly saved his penalty after the keeper had brought down Julian Joachim.

"It was a wonderful game and a great performance by a player," said Liverpool coach Gerard Houllier.

Sheffield Wednesday had only one win in their last 10 games but a bad error by Peter Schmeichel, who let Niclas Alexandersson's short slip through his hands, allowed them to go ahead after 14 minutes.

Andy Cole equalised but a second for Alexandersson and one by Wim Jonk gave Wednesday the points.

A 77th minute Efan Ekoku goal was enough for Wimbledon to beat Arsenal but a bigger worry for coach Arsene Wenger will be the injuries received by Patrick Viera and Dennis Bergkamp that makes both doubtful for Wednesday's European Champions' League game against RC Lens.

"We were not aggressive enough, they won more of the fights," said Wenger.

Southampton climbed off the bottom for the first time this season with a 2-0 win at Blackburn Rovers, the losers dropping to last place. Matt Oakley, after four minutes, and Steve Basham, a minute from time, earned Saints their first away win of the season.

Tottenham Hotspur beat 10-man Nottingham Forest 2-0 and Middlesbrough beat Coventry by the same score.

There were 28 goals in the day's eight games an average of 3.5 per match, which would hoist their Premier league from last place in Europe's goals-per-game standings.

Derby County play West Ham United today and Everton face Newcastle United on Monday.

Blackburn, who take on Real Betis of Spain in the UEFA Cup, needed an equaliser from midfielder Jonathan Binotto to salvage a 1-1 draw at home to Perugia.

Perugia went ahead against the run of play through Croat Milan Rapajic. He slipped inside the Bologna defence down the right touchline after 37 minutes and curled a left foot shot into the roof of the net from a tight angle.

Binotto's reply five minutes later ensured Bologna stretched their unbeaten run to 14 matches.

Hodgson parts with Rovers

BLACKBURN, England, Nov 22: Blackburn Rovers manager Roy Hodgson is stepping down with immediate effect, it was announced on Saturday, reports AFP.

The move comes after Rovers slumped to the foot of the English Premiership table following a 2-0 home defeat by fellow strugglers Southampton, who moved one place above them.

Despite Hodgson, who coached Switzerland to the 1994 World Cup finals and had spells at Inter Milan, guiding Blackburn to sixth place last season and a UEFA Cup spot, this season has been a disaster.

The 51-year-old, who only recently was suggested as a possible successor to England supreme Glenn Hoddle, has been the 1995 Premiership champions win only two of their 14 league games this season, the last on October 3.

British police probe booters' transfers

LONDON, Nov 22: (Reuters/Internet): British police said on Saturday they were investigating the transfer of a number of Australian soccer players to Portsmouth Football Club while it was being run by former England manager Terry Venables.

Fraud squad detectives in the southern English county of Hampshire are examining allegations of "bad business practice" involving the purchase of players last year.

They declined to give details, but media reports said five players are believed to be involved. They include Robert Enes from Sydney United, Hamilton Thorpe from Western Adelaide, Craig Foster from Fairfield Marconi and Australian John Aloisi, who joined from the Italian club Cremonese. All four joined Portsmouth in 1997.

Venables, who bought Portsmouth in 1996, has declined to comment. His spokesman said "He is not aware of any situation requiring any investigation in any event."

News of the Portsmouth inquiry follows the decision taken on Tuesday by English First Division club Crystal Palace, where Venables is now coach, to ask the Football Association to investigate a shortfall in the payment for the transfer of two Chinese internationals.

Palace paid 1.35 million pounds (2.2 million dollars) in August for Fan Zhiyi and Sun Jihai. But the Chinese football association is reported to have received only 900,000 pounds.

Monterrey in Libertadores

RIO DE JANEIRO, Nov 22: (Reuters/Internet): Mexico's Monterrey qualified for next year's South American Libertadores Cup by beating Universidad de Los Andes of Venezuela 4-1.

Monterrey finished top of the qualifying group featuring two teams from Mexico, which takes part in the South American tournament by invitation, and two from Venezuela, the country with the worst record in the competition.

Iran might play USA again

TEHRAN, Nov 22: (Reuters/Internet): Iran's soccer federation is weighing an invitation to play friendly matches in the United States, a federation official said in remarks published on Wednesday last.

"This proposal has been sent to us but we have to study it first... We have not replied yet," the daily Zan quoted Nasser Noamouz, manager of Iran's national soccer team, as saying.

Stuttgart was one of the six stops on the indoor European circuit for Sampras as he chased points in an attempt to pad his advantage over Rios. Never before had Sampras played six straight weeks in Europe.

Sampras won only one of the six tournaments, reflecting the mixed season he's had this year. He captured Wimbledon for the fifth time, but won no other Grand Slam and has four titles this year.

Rios on the other hand captured a tour-high seven titles. But the left-handed Chilean also has lacked consistency in the finish of the season.

Injuries forced him to drop out of two European events (Sampras also withdrew from one) and he lost last week in the quarterfinals in Santiago, where a victory would have propelled him to No 1.

Every time Rios had a chance of overtaking Sampras in the last few weeks, Sampras managed to stay in a given tournament longer than the Chilean.

No 3 Patrick Rafter, the two-time US Open champion, also had a chance of seizing the top ranking but finally gave in to the injuries and will not compete in Hanover.

So, although he has been far from dominant, Sampras has received some help from his rivals and goes into the championship ahead of Rios.

Sampras and Rios are seeded at the head of the two groups of eight players under the round-robin format of the event. The top two from each group advance into the semifinals.

If Sampras wins the 3.5 million dollar championship, he will end as No 1. The same is true for Rios.

There are other possibilities. For Rios to finish No 1, he has to win at least two matches in Hanover—and win one more match than Sampras.

If Rios fails to win at least two matches, Sampras will finish as the season's No 1 no matter what he does in the tournament, which is played on an indoor hard-court surface.

Sampras has complained about the lack of attention his achievements are getting back home.

"It is not easy to do year in year out, win Grand Slams and be No 1. I feel much more respected in Europe than I do in the States, from the press and from the people."

"Americans expect me to win every match I play," said Sampras, who has won 11 Grand Slam titles, one short of Roy Emerson's record.

In addition to Sampras and Rios, the six others players in the event are: Andre Agassi, Carlos Moya, Alex Corretja, Karol Kucera, Tim Henman and Yevgeny Kafelnikov. Richard Krajicek qualified but also had to pull out with a knee injury.

Roma's missed opportunity

ROME, Nov 22: AS Roma squandered a chance to go two points clear at the top of Serie A when they were held 1-1 at home by mid-table Bari on Saturday, reports Reuters.

Zdenek Zeman's side needed a late penalty from newly capped Italy striker Francesco Totti to salvage a point. It put them level with leaders Fiorentina who play Inter Milan on Sunday.

Bari had taken the lead through South African striker Phil Masinga, whose goals gave his side a stunning 3-2 win over Inter at the San Siro earlier this month.

Swedish forward Yksel Osmanovski broke down the left flank after 76 minutes. His cross eluded three Roma defenders before Masinga fired his shot past goalkeeper Antonio Chimentia.

Roma, who play FC Zurich in the UEFA Cup on Tuesday night, responded almost immediately Totti bursting into the penalty area to meet a cross from Brazilian defender Aldair.

Bari defender Rachid Nqrouz was deemed to have handled the ball before it reached Totti and the referee awarded a fiercely contested penalty which the Roma player duly converted.

Roma's fellow UEFA cup hopefuls Parma stumbled to a 1-0 defeat at Cagliari — their first loss in seven matches.

Sierra Leone striker Mohamed Kallon scored the decisive goal for the Sardinians in the 78th minute.

Midfielder Gianni Cavezzi created the goal with a superb through ball to Gaetano Vasari. Vasari crossed from the right and Kallon crashed the ball high into the roof of Gianluigi Buffon's net.

Bologna, who take on Real Betis of Spain in the UEFA Cup, needed an equaliser from midfielder Jonathan Binotto to salvage a 1-1 draw at home to Perugia.

Perugia went ahead against the run of play through Croat Milan Rapajic. He slipped inside the Bologna defence down the right touchline after 37 minutes and curled a left foot shot into the roof of the net from a tight angle.

Binotto's reply five minutes later ensured Bologna stretched their unbeaten run to 14 matches.

Hodgson parts with Rovers

BLACKBURN, England, Nov 22: Blackburn Rovers manager Roy Hodgson is stepping down with immediate effect, it was announced on Saturday, reports AFP.

The move comes after Rovers slumped to the foot of the English Premiership table following a 2-0 home defeat by fellow strugglers Southampton, who moved one place above them.

Despite Hodgson, who coached Switzerland to the 1994 World Cup finals and had spells at Inter Milan, guiding Blackburn to sixth place last season and a UEFA Cup spot, this season has been a disaster.

The 51-year-old, who only recently was suggested as a possible successor to England supreme Glenn Hoddle, has been the 1995 Premiership champions win only two of their 14 league games this season, the last on October 3.

British police probe booters' transfers

LONDON, Nov 22: (Reuters/Internet): British police said on Saturday they were investigating the transfer of a number of Australian soccer players to Portsmouth Football Club while it was being run by former England manager Terry Venables.

Fraud squad detectives in the southern English county of Hampshire are examining allegations of "bad business practice" involving the purchase of players last year.

They declined to give details, but media reports said five players are believed to be involved. They include Robert Enes from Sydney United, Hamilton Thorpe from Western Adelaide, Craig Foster from Fairfield Marconi and Australian John Aloisi, who joined from the Italian club Cremonese. All four joined Portsmouth in 1997.

Venables, who bought Portsmouth in 1996, has declined to comment. His spokesman said "He is not aware of any situation requiring any investigation in any event."

News of the Portsmouth inquiry follows the decision taken on Tuesday by English First Division club Crystal Palace, where Venables is now coach, to ask the Football Association to investigate a shortfall in the payment for the transfer of two Chinese internationals.

Palace paid 1.35 million pounds (2.2 million dollars) in August for Fan Zhiyi and Sun Jihai. But the Chinese football association is reported to have received only 900,000 pounds.

Monterrey in Libertadores

RIO DE JANEIRO, Nov 22: (Reuters/Internet): Mexico's Monterrey qualified for next year's South American Libertadores Cup by beating Universidad de Los Andes of Venezuela 4-1.

Monterrey finished top of the qualifying group featuring two teams from Mexico, which takes part in the South American tournament by invitation, and two from Venezuela, the country with the worst record in the competition.

Rough night for big boys

MADRID, Nov 22: Real Madrid and Barcelona both suffered damaging defeats on a Saturday night of surprises in the Spanish First Division, reports Reuters.

European champions Real fell 3-1 at Valencia, with Argentine striker Claudio Lopez scoring twice. Barcelona went down 1-0 to Mallorca through an unfortunate own goal from Wregi Barjuan.

With Celta Vigo also losing 2-0 at Alaves — and surrendering the last remaining unbeaten record in the process — Mallorca moved clear at the top with 22 points from 11 games.

Celta dropped to second, two points behind, with Barcelona third on 19 and Real Madrid fourth ahead of Valencia on goals scored.

Real's performance at Valencia was arguably their worst of the season as they were taken apart by the home side.

Miguel Angel Angulo put Valencia ahead on 34 minutes, capitalising on a mistake from German keeper Bodo Illgner, who spilled a long shot straight to him.

And although Real came back at the start of the second half, Savio turning home from close range after hesitation in the defence, Valencia took the points with two expertly taken goals from Lopez.

The Argentine smacked home his first after 62 minutes following a long ball out of defence, and then sealed the victory nine minutes later as he controlled a cross from the right and side-footed past Illgner.

Defeat for Real was their second in as many weeks and will increase the pressure on Guus Hiddink, who, like his fellow Dutchman Louis van Gaal at Barcelona, has been under fire.

Van Gaal will put their Mallorca reverse down to a lack of fortune rather than any shortcomings in the side.

The Catalans were in charge until Sergi, attempting to cut out Lauren's cross from the left, succeeded only in diverting the ball past Raud Hesp and into his own goal.

Mallorca then packed their defence — difficult enough to breach at the best of times — and absorbed everything the likes of Rivaldo and Patrick Kluyvert threw at them.

Both strikers had chances, but with the Brazilian looking tired after his midweek international excursion against Russia and Kluyvert struggling to find his touch in front of goal, Mallorca keeper Carlos Roa was rarely troubled.

The best performance of the day came from Atletico Madrid, who eased the pressure on coach Arrigo Sacchi with a 6-1 demolition of Valladolid.

Sacchi's side, who started the day 10th, showed real character as they overcame a nervous start which saw Julio Cesar give Valladolid the lead inside the first two minutes.

Atletico, struggling to find their passing rhythm in the absence of the suspended Juninho and injury victims Carlos Aguilera and Jordi Lardin, swept back into the game on 26 minutes through Argentine-born midfielder Oscar Mena.

Vladimir Jugovic gave Atletico the lead just before halftime and the second half became an exhibition game as Valladolid faded badly.

Atletico netted through Zoran Njegus — a pilerdriver from the edge of the area — Ferdinand Correa, Kiko Narvaez and Jose Mari to move sixth.



Barcelona's Brazilian superstar Rivaldo (C) coming under a challenge from Mallorca's Jovan Stankovic during their Spanish Premier league fixture at Mallorca on November 21. The locals won 1-0.



Barcelona's Brazilian superstar Rivaldo (C) coming under a challenge from Mallorca's Jovan Stankovic during their Spanish Premier league fixture at Mallorca on November 21. The locals won 1-0.

— AFP photo

Del Piero on way to USA

TURIN, Italy, Nov 22: Juventus star Alessandro Del Piero flies to the United States today for an operation on his left knee, his club announced here Friday, reports AFP.

The surgery on the 24-year-old Italian international is being carried out by a specialist at the Hawkins Clinic in Denver, Colorado which has already conducted operations on two other Italian players, Maurizio Ganz (AC Milan) and Nicola Bertl (Inter Milan).

Del Piero, who was injured when colliding with a Udinese defender a fortnight ago, faces a six-month spell on the sidelines.

The Sampras-Rios show

HANOVER, Nov 22 (AP): Pete Sampras or Marcelo Rios. It's come down to the last week of the season to determine who will finish the year as No 1 in the world.

In one of the closest finishes in recent years, Sampras leads Rios by a mere 33 points going into the ATP Tour World Championship that start Tuesday.

The season-ending event brings together the eight players with the best results during the year and the list can differ slightly from the current computer rankings, which are based on the results of the last 52 weeks.

This is the first time since 1995 that the championship has a bearing on the No 1 season-ending ranking.

Sampras, 27, should have a mental edge over Rios, the eccentric Chilean who can cap a fine year by regaining the No 1 ranking he has already held during two brief spells this year.

But Rios, 22, is competing at the exclusive event for the first time, while Sampras has won it four times already and always excels in the prestigious tournament.

Sampras is also gunning for an unprecedented achievement — finishing as No 1 in the world for six years in a row.

Sampras shares the record of five with fellow American Jimmy Connors.

"It's a record that might not ever be broken. It is that hard to do," Sampras said.

"I'll do whatever it takes to do it because it's definitely up there with the greatest achievements in tennis," Sampras said last month at the tournament in Stuttgart.

Stuttgart was one of the six stops on the indoor European circuit for Sampras as he chased points in an attempt to pad his advantage over Rios. Never before had Sampras played six straight weeks in Europe.

Sampras won only one of the six tournaments, reflecting the mixed season he's had this year. He captured Wimbledon for the fifth time, but won no other Grand Slam and has four titles this year.

Rios on the other hand captured a tour-high seven titles. But the left-handed Chilean also has lacked consistency in the finish of the season.

Injuries forced him to drop out of two European events (Sampras also withdrew from one) and he lost last week in the quarterfinals in Santiago, where a victory would have propelled him to No 1.

Every time Rios had a chance of overtaking Sampras in the last few weeks, Sampras managed to stay in a given tournament longer than the Chilean.

No 3 Patrick Rafter, the two-time US Open champion, also had a chance of seizing the top ranking but finally gave in to the injuries and will not compete in Hanover.

So, although he has been far from dominant, Sampras has received some help from his rivals and goes into the championship ahead of Rios.

Sampras and Rios are seeded at the head of the two groups of eight players under the round-robin format of the event. The top two from each group advance into the semifinals.

If Sampras wins the 3.5 million dollar championship, he will end as No 1. The same is true for Rios.

There are other possibilities. For Rios to finish No 1, he has to win at least two matches in Hanover—and win one more match than Sampras.

If Rios fails to win at least two matches, Sampras will finish as the season's No 1 no matter what he does in the tournament, which is played on an indoor hard-court surface.

Sampras has complained about the lack of attention his achievements are getting back home.

"It is not easy to do year in year out, win Grand Slams and be No 1. I feel much more respected in Europe than I do in the States, from the press and from the people."

"Americans expect me to win every match I play," said Sampras, who has won 11 Grand Slam titles, one short of Roy Emerson's record.

In addition to Sampras and Rios, the six others players in the event are: Andre Agassi, Carlos Moya, Alex Corretja, Karol Kucera, Tim Henman and Yevgeny Kafelnikov. Richard Krajicek qualified but also had to pull out with a knee injury.

This proposal has been sent to us but we have to study it first... We have not replied yet," the daily Zan quoted Nasser Noamouz, manager of Iran's national soccer team, as saying.

Stuttgart was one of the six stops on the indoor European circuit for Sampras as he chased points in an attempt to pad his advantage over Rios. Never before had Sampras played six straight weeks in Europe.

Sampras won only one of the six tournaments, reflecting the mixed season he's had this year. He captured Wimbledon for the fifth time, but won no other Grand Slam and has four titles this year.

Rios on the other hand captured a tour-high seven titles. But the left-handed Chilean also has lacked consistency in the finish of the season.

Injuries forced him to drop out of two European events (Sampras also withdrew from one) and he lost last week in the quarterfinals in Santiago, where a victory would have propelled him to No 1.

Every time Rios had a chance of overtaking Sampras in the last few weeks, Sampras managed to stay in a given tournament longer than the Chilean.

No 3 Patrick Rafter, the two-time US Open champion, also had a chance of seizing the top ranking but finally gave in to the injuries and will not compete in Hanover.

So, although he has been far from dominant, Sampras has received some help from his rivals and goes into the championship ahead of Rios.

Sampras and Rios are seeded at the head of the two groups of eight players under the round-robin format of the event. The top two from each group advance into the semifinals.

If Sampras wins the 3.5 million dollar championship, he will end as No 1. The same is true for Rios.

There are other possibilities. For Rios to finish No 1, he has to win at least two matches in Hanover—and win one more match than Sampras.

If Rios fails to win at least two matches, Sampras will finish as the season's No 1 no matter what he does in the tournament, which is played on an indoor hard-court surface.

Sampras has complained about the lack of attention his achievements are getting back home.

"It is not easy to do year in year out, win Grand Slams and be No 1. I feel much more respected in Europe than I do in the States, from the press and from the people."

"Americans expect me to win every match I play," said Sampras, who has won 11 Grand Slam titles, one short of Roy Emerson's record.

SIX NO TRUMPS

A K Sayeedul Huq

SEE WHAT CAN BEAT THE CONTRACT!

(Hand # 135)

| | | | |
|------------|----------|------------|------------|
| North | West | East (D) | South |
| ♠: AK543 | ♠: J1087 | ♠: S Q6 | ♠: S 92 |
| ♥: 105 | ♥: 876 | ♥: H AK094 | ♥: H J32 |
| ♦: D 4 | ♦: A Q93 | ♦: D AK072 | ♦: D J65 |
| ♣: C J8652 | ♣: C KQ | ♣: C 10 | ♣: C A9743 |

Bidding: East-West were